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Imagery analysis report

Soviet Battalion Defensive Perimeters In Afghanistan (S)

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SOVIET BATTALION DEFENSIVE PERIMETERS IN AFGHANISTAN (S)

1. (S/D) Since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, several examples of battalion-sized defensive perimeters have been observed. The battalions observed have included combat units deployed in field positions during combat operations and units deployed as semipermanent garrisons near towns. Three good examples of defensive perimeters include a BMD armored personnel carrier (APC)-equipped airborne battalion and a reinforced BMP APC-equipped motorized rifle battalion observed near Bar Surtan (Bar Sholtan) in the Konar Valley during an offensive in May 1980 and a BTR-60PB APC-equipped motorized rifle battalion stationed outside of the town of Nahrin (Figure 1).

2. (S/D) The BMD-equipped airborne battalion was observed in a defensive perimeter at Bar Surtan Deployment Area [] Figure 2) []. Equipment observed included 29 BMD (with white maneuver markings), eight BTR-60PB, nine POL trucks, nine cargo trucks, and three small tents. The defensive perimeter was centered on the ruins of a small castle which contained the battalion command post area and was on a ridgeline by a river. Twenty-five of the BMD were deployed around the defensive perimeter, which measured 254 by 234 meters. Prepared defenses included 17 vehicle revetments, some personnel trenches, and a probable SA-7 firing position. The average distance between the BMD on the perimeter was 30 meters—the longest distance 168 meters and the shortest 6 meters. Evidence of hostilities in the area included several probable bomb craters and a damaged bridge.

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3. (S/D) The reinforced BMP-equipped motorized rifle battalion was observed on [] in a defensive perimeter at Bar Surtan Deployment Area near the BMD airborne battalion (Figure 3). Equipment observed included 44 BMP, three BTR-60PB, three BRDM-2 armored cars, five 122mm D-30 howitzers, six ZIL rocket launchers, four GAZ-66 mortars, 24 trucks, and one POL truck. The defensive perimeter was centered on a small orchard and a ruined villa which contained the battalion command post area. The rocket launcher and howitzer batteries were deployed in firing positions next to the command post area. The mortar battery was parked next to the command post area but only one mortar was set up in firing position. Thirty-five of the BMP were deployed on the defensive perimeter, which measured 333 by 295 meters. The average distance between the BMP on the perimeter was 31 meters—the longest distance 240 meters and the shortest 7 meters. The least defended sector of the defensive perimeter was the portion facing the airborne battalion across the river, although vehicle tracks indicated that five vehicles had been previously located in that sector. No vehicle revetments or personnel trenches were present on or within the perimeter. Evidence of hostilities in the area included two probable bomb craters.

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4. (S/D) The BTR-60PB-equipped motorized rifle battalion was observed in a defensive perimeter at Nahrin Barracks Division and Regiment and Battalion Headquarters [] Figure 4) on []. Other units present included a tank platoon and a reconnaissance company. The battalion, which was still present in mid-July, is the Soviet garrison for the area. Equipment observed on [] included 23 BTR-60PB, three T-54/-55 tanks, four BMP, one BRDM-2 armored car, six probable mortars, one probable 76mm antitank (AT) gun, one armored recovery vehicle (ARV), five POL trucks, and 19 trucks. The defensive perimeter measured 565 by 535 meters, with the battalion command post area in the center. Fifteen of the BTR-60PB were in vehicle revetments on the defensive perimeter. Twelve unoccupied revetments were also on the perimeter. The average distance between the BTR-60PB was 115 meters—the longest distance 185 meters and the shortest 35 meters. Personnel firing positions were present near most of the vehicle revetments. The probable mortar battery was deployed in revetted firing positions immediately south of the command post area. The tank platoon was parked on the northeast edge of the command post area. A probable SA-7 firing position was near the center of the perimeter. The reconnaissance company was in convoy formation near the north edge of the perimeter.

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5. (S/D) Some similarities were observed in all three of the defensive perimeters: relative locations of the command post areas, deployment of the APC in an oval pattern, and, in two of the battalions, the location of the artillery firing batteries next to the command post areas. The primary difference was in the size of the perimeters for the two battalions conducting field operations as compared to that of the battalion in garrison at Nahrin. The perimeter at Nahrin was almost twice the size of the battalions at Bar Surtan and, consequently, the APC were farther apart. Also, more extensive personnel trenches were observed at Nahrin.

(S) Comments and queries regarding this report are welcome. They may be directed to [], Third World Forces Division, Imagery Exploitation Group, NPIC, []

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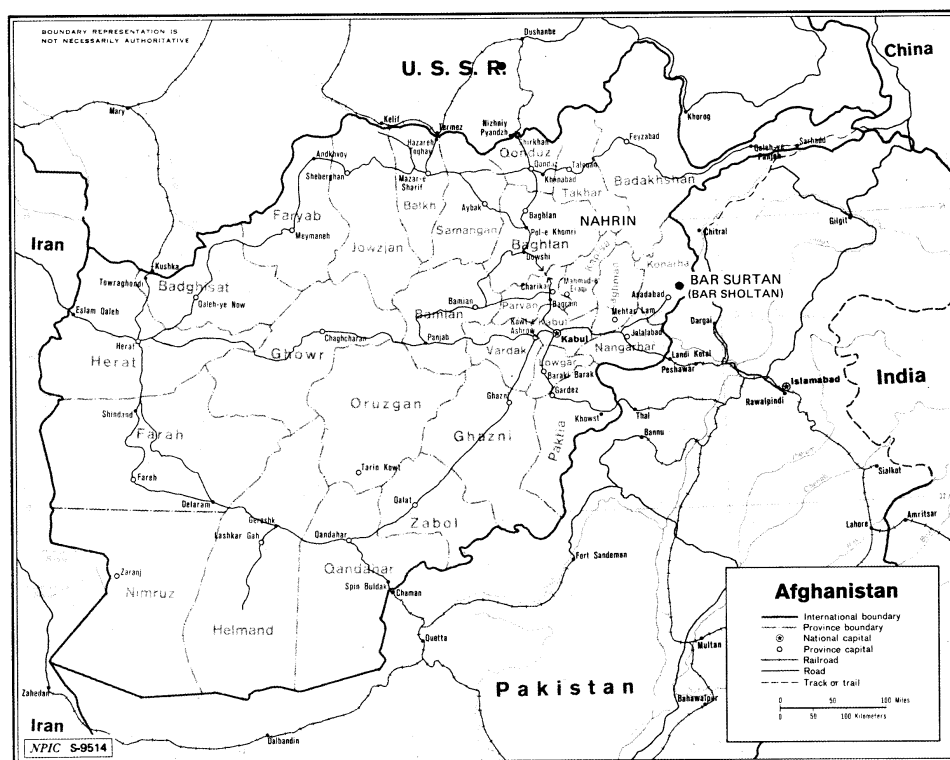


FIGURE 1. LOCATIONS OF BATTALION DEFENSIVE PERIMETERS IN AFGHANISTAN

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